



WEARABLES at WORK

Are your employees ready to wear smartwatches, glasses, and more on the job? And are you ready to train them on it?

BY LORRI FREIFELD

These days, glasses aren't just for seeing—they're also for surfing the 'Net and taking pictures. And watches aren't just for telling time—they also track your steps, heartbeat, blood pressure, and more. Wearable technology such as smartwatches and glasses not only track health and wellness data, they also can be

used to record meetings, scan documents, provide navigation, and take photographs for business, among other uses.

The question is: Are employees and employers ready to use this technology in the workplace?

A survey commissioned by The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated and conducted by Harris Poll found that workers around the world are ready to embrace wearable technology at work, with nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of 9,000 online adults seeing at least one potential workplace benefit of wearable technology. And 66 percent of 2,009 American workers would be willing to use wearable tech if it helped them do their job better—a 7 percent jump from the year before—according to Cornerstone OnDemand’s 2014 “The State of the Workplace Productivity Report.”

While an April 2015 survey by Robert Half Technology revealed that 81 percent of 2,400 CIOs at U.S. companies with 100 or more employees believe wearables eventually will happen in the workplace—with 37 percent believing it will happen within the next three to five years and another 24 percent pointing to more than five years—many employers are not quite ready to jump on the wearables bandwagon.

Indeed, when queried on this, the majority of the 2015 Training Top 125 winners said they either were not using wearable technology currently for employee wellness or productivity purposes and/or had no intention of doing so due to concerns such as data security, privacy, and other HR-

related issues. Others said they are taking a “wait and see” position.

So is it just another technology fad? Joyce Maroney, director of The Workforce Institute, Kronos, doesn’t think so. “There’s a strong belief that wearable technology will take off in the workplace even before the home because devices such as smartwatches, intelligent ID badges, and fitness and health monitors can provide organizations with uncharted data collection points to greatly

improve safety, productivity, collaboration, and overall workplace effectiveness.”

Pros and Cons

As with most budding technology, wearable technology has both pros and cons. “Companies like Bass & Associates that deal with non-public information have been negatively affected by the improvements in wearable technology,” notes Andrew Hoskins, Training & Development manager at Training Top 125er law firm Bass & Associates. “Basically, our industry now must deal with potential security issues that were unheard of 20 years ago. Any device that has the ability to store data (i.e., iPod, MP3, tablet, etc.) also has the ability to be connected to a computer and, thus, creates the potential for stolen data. Companies that deal with private information need to be extra vigilant when protecting that data. At Bass, our policies require that any portable device with storage capability be turned off and put away while in our work areas.”

Training Top 125er Allied Global, a business services company, has a similar policy, according to Joel MacCharles, VP of Innovation. “Because of the amount of sensitive data in our building, wearables are not an option—employees must have their phones turned off before entering the building as an example.”

Likewise, there are privacy concerns for employees as the company gains access to health data, for example (visit <http://www.trainingmag.com/are-we-ready-wearable-technology-workplace> to read the recent Training Day blog, “Are We

Questions to Ponder

Robert Half Technology offers three questions for leaders to consider when evaluating whether to support wearables for the business:

1. Will this implementation enhance our business and/or productivity? Consider whether or not a new technology benefits your company and how it will add value to the business. Beyond hopping on a new trend, it’s vital to measure the long-term benefits of additional devices and how they could positively impact the workplace. Effectively answering this question will help communicate the potential value to leaders in the organization.

2. Are we aware of security risks and is the company equipped to handle them? New technologies have the potential to introduce security vulnerabilities. Technology leaders in particular must understand—and communicate to other business leaders—the difference in security risk levels with enterprise-provided wearables versus employees’ personal devices and develop plans and policies to match.

3. Have we prepared a sound policy, communication plan, and training strategy around wearable technology at the office? It’s crucial to have a preemptive communication approach that will address any new policies and necessary training. Preparedness will be fundamental to the successful adoption of wearables for the workplace.

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Ready for Wearable Technology in the Workplace?”). And that feeds into the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) debate organizations currently face with employees using personal smartphones or tablets for mobile learning. Should employers provide the devices or allow employees to use their own? If employees use their personal devices, is the data obtained public or private and how can it be used—or shared? And what happens when employees synch their devices, potentially moving sensitive company information from device to device?

On the positive side, beyond increasing productivity and wellness, says Kris Duggan, CEO of goal science company BetterWorks, wearable technology paired with the right apps and programs for quantifying work can offer benefits for both employees and employers, including:

1. Quantifying work. Fitbit (wristband) users take 43 percent more steps than non-Fitbit users, and the same thing happens when wearables are applied in the workplace. “Quantifying work helps businesses respond quickly to

changes in business environments, encourages innovation, and fosters trust,” Duggan says.

2. Transforming data into feedback. With more than 150 million nights of sleep tracked last year, Jawbone is performing the largest sleep study in human history. “The same is true across organizations that are tracking employees’ work habits,” Duggan says. “Data becomes personalized and actionable for each employee, thanks to wearables.”

3. Giving employers and employees openness and social reinforcement. Individuals are 40 percent more likely to achieve their goals by writing them down, and there’s a 78 percent increase in achievement when sharing weekly progress with a friend, Duggan says. “Wearables provide a platform for both of these things at work. Employees can benefit from accountability and employers can benefit when employees’ goals are made transparent to the larger group.”

Setting Wearable Goals

When implementing a wearable technology strategy for employees, Duggan suggests organizations should start by defining their immediate and long-term goals. “Some wearable programs are designed to create work-life balance for employees, like a Fitbit three-month step challenge that encourages employees to get up from their desks and walk more,” he explains. “Other wearable programs dive deeper into employee and employer work progress.”

For example, Apple Watch users can use the BetterWorks app to show real-time goal progress without interrupting their workflow. The app gives employees a snapshot of where current goals stand, and allows them to add short check-ins and cheer on coworkers who are achieving their goals.

Depending on the goals of the wearable implementation, Duggan recommends, “organizations should be selective in choosing a wearable strategy that works best for everyone across the company—from entry-level employees to middle managers and beyond.”

In addition, organizations may want to consider incentives that encourage employees to utilize the technology. Eight in 10 full-time employees would be motivated to use company-provided wearable tech that allows employers to track their health and wellness data, according to the Cornerstone OnDemand report. Some would be enticed to do this in exchange for benefits such as extra 5 percent end-of-year bonuses (67 percent), reduced health insurance premiums (57 percent), or discounts to exercise programs (36 percent). A slightly greater number of employees (76 percent) would be willing to do the same for wearable tech that tracks job performance and productivity. In exchange, respondents would be open to receiving an extra vacation day for each month’s data (54 percent), a flexible and remote work schedule (46 percent), or a workweek reduced by 5 percent (41 percent).

Ultimately, the key to successful implementation and



Source: Kronos Incorporated (2014); found at kronos.com/wearables-survey

adoption of any wearable technology strategy lies in communicating the strategy and training employees on the company policies associated with it.

Case Study: Keller Williams Realty, Inc.

One company that has successfully implemented wearable technology at work is No. 1 Training Top 125er Keller Williams Realty, Inc. At the company's 2014 annual convention, all of approximately 240 corporate associates received Fitbits to track their steps. The goal, says Keller Williams CEO Chris Heller, was to both thank them for their hard work and to help motivate them to continue to lead healthy lifestyles. "At Keller Williams, associates are not only encouraged to lead healthier lifestyles, they are empowered," he explains. "And it is through wearable technology that our associates can easily track their progress, motivate each other, and foster a healthy dose of competition."

Keller Williams trains its associates on how to build healthy habits. Keller Williams Co-Founder and Chairman Gary Keller, author of *New York Times* bestseller "The ONE Thing," found that it takes 66 days to build a new habit. Keller Williams associates take this advice and literally run with it—participating in the annual office-wide 66-Day Step Challenge to hit more than 10,000 steps per day. "Prizes are awarded and the competition for top individual and top team is steep," Heller says, "so accurate step-monitoring technology is vital. At the start of the 66-Day Step Challenge, our corporate Wellness manager distributes a list of popular wearable technologies that capture step counts."

Many Keller Williams associates also participate in local walks and fun runs, such as the Run for the Water that Keller Williams supports as title sponsor. "These events enable our associates to not only promote wellness, but also give back to the community. With associates in the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, wearable technology and apps allow our worldwide associates to participate remotely," Heller says.

Keller Williams' Employee Leadership Council (ELC), which includes representatives from every department, reviews benefits options and then votes on yearly health benefits for corporate associates. "While there are many factors to consider," Heller says, "they chose a provider that offered a program allowing our associates to link their wearable technology to an online community and receive rewards for their healthy choices."

Heller says the Top 3 benefits Keller Williams has reaped from employees using wearable technology are:

1. Productivity—"A healthier employee is a happier, more productive employee. By training our associates on how to improve their overall wellness, both their personal and professional productivity improves. Technology gives our associates the power to set goals, accurately monitor their progress, and then meet and surpass those goals."

2. Community—"We have seen the ability of wearable

Product Watch

Companies that have launched wearable technology products include:

APPLE: Apple Watch, which collects movement and location data

FITBIT: Wristband, sensors, scales, and apps that track fitness, diet, and sleeping patterns

GOOGLE: Google Glass, which allows Internet surfing and more

INTEL: Nixie, a wrist-mounted drone with a camera that leaps into the air to grab an action selfie

JAWBONE: UP, a wristband that tracks daily activities

NIKE: FuelBand, a fitness tracker

OCULUS: The Rift, a virtual reality head-mounted display

PEBBLE: SmartWatch, a 24/7 fitness tracker

RINGLY: An 18K ring with a semi-precious stone and the features of a smartwatch; syncs with smartphone to buzz with notifications, plus Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Tinder

SAMSUNG: Galaxy Gear, a smartwatch that is a cross between an iPod Nano and Android phone

technology to connect our associates across cities, states, and countries. Online communities linked through wearable technology foster competition; improve accountability; motivate our associates to make healthier, more active decisions; and help build and maintain relationships across our organization."

3. Mindset—"Wearable technology is a constant reminder to have our personal wellness in mind. Whether it's the Apple Watch buzzing hourly to encourage associates to stand up, or just looking down and being visually reminded to take the stairs over the elevator, wearable technology helps our associates make better, healthier choices."

For companies considering implementing wearable technology, Heller offers this reminder: "The whole point of wearable technology is that it is user-friendly and easy to use. The challenge is to engage and motivate your employees in a way that speaks to them—to meet the learning style of your participants. For example, we know that some of our associates are motivated by competition—so we promote the 66-Day Step Challenge and other challenges that ignite that competitive spirit. Other associates are motivated by the social component—so we offer the Route 66 walk (a quick group walk around and throughout the office) and the larger Wellness Walks at our events. Train to the style of your learners."

Ultimately, Heller believes "if the growth (and speed of growth) of mobile is any indicator, wearable technology will continue to expand. The real estate profession is increasingly mobile—and Keller Williams is constantly innovating and improving our technology to meet and exceed the needs of our associates. From a GPS-powered mobile app to Google Apps for Business that are accessible on any device—we strive to meet our associates exactly where they are, and find ways for them to leverage their resources and maximize their time. The next place we meet our associates just might be wearable." 